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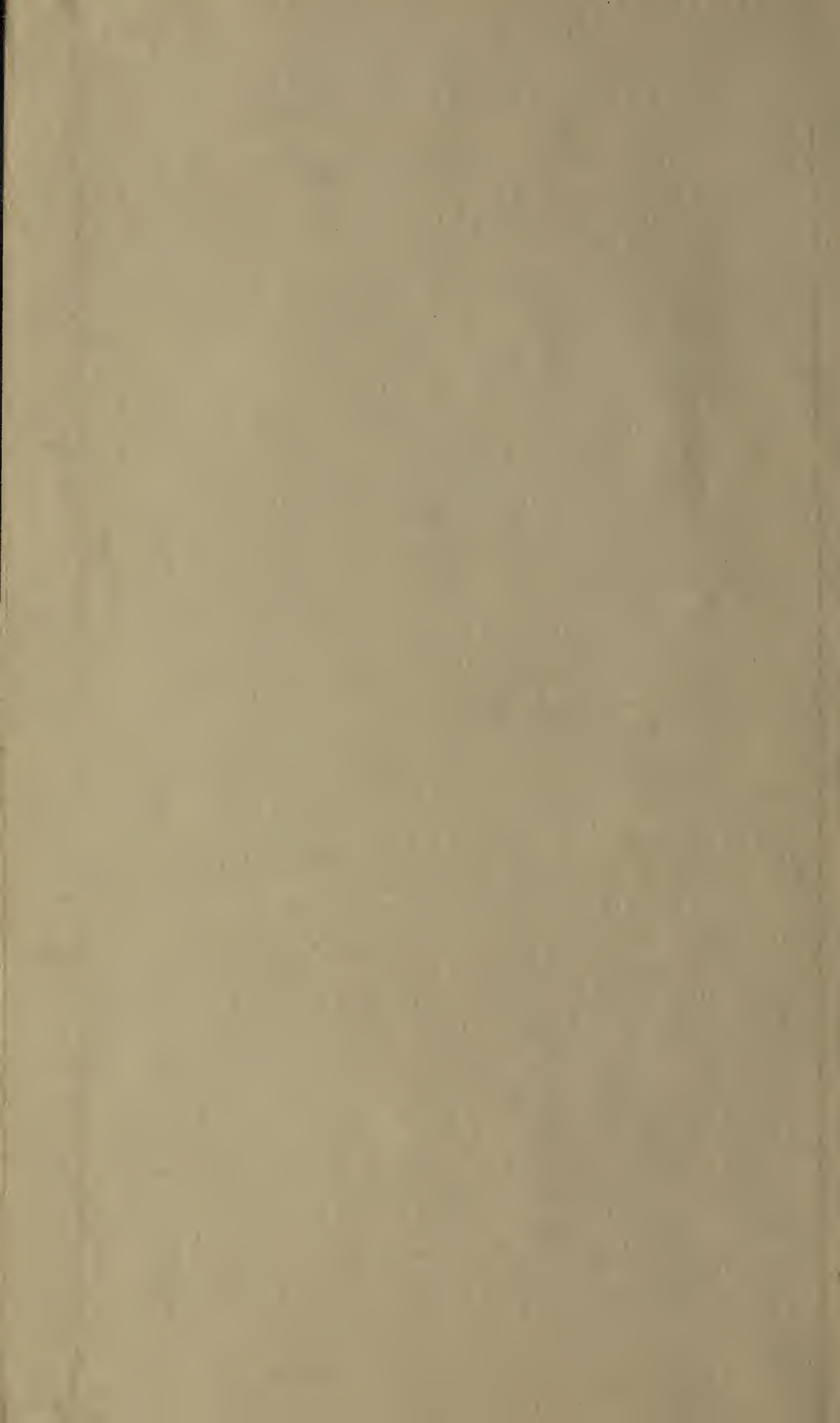
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Mass. Assoc. of Relief



MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION
OF RELIEF OFFICERS
1900.

REPORT ON

The Best Methods of Dealing with
TRAMPS AND WAYFARERS

READ AT MEETING OF NOVEMBER 14, 1900.

4. ADDRESS OF PROFESSOR FRANCIS G. PEABODY.
8. **REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF 1899.**
18. DISCUSSION.
22. LETTER OF JACOB A. RIIS.

APPENDIX.

- A. QUESTIONS SENT BY COMMITTEE OF 1899.
- B. LETTERS RECEIVED FROM OVERSEERS OF THE POOR.
- C. PAPER, READ AT MEETING OF DEC. 12, 1900. BY DR. HENRY
SHAW.

BOSTON:

J. P. SHULTS, PRINTER, 105 SUMMER STREET.

1901.

Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers.

ORGANIZED SEPT. 8. 1887.

The design of this Organization shall be to acquire a thorough and uniform method of administration of public relief and to promote a social interest.

Any person holding official relation to any Municipal or Town Board of Overseers of the Poor (and in Boston to Commissioners of Public Institutions also) shall be eligible to membership.

ORGANIZATION, 1900-1901.

President:

EBEN BECKFORD, of Lynn.

Vice-President:

HENRY M. HARTSHORN, of Malden.

Secretary:

OTIS MERRIAM, of Chelsea.

Treasurer:

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THOMAS D. HEVEY, of Woburn.

Legislative Committee.

EBEN BECKFORD, of Lynn.

EDWARD F. BROWN, of Salem.

FRANCIS B. GARDNER, of Brockton.

HENRY M. HARTSHORN, of Malden.

CALVIN H. CLARK, of Medford.

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MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF RELIEF OFFICERS 1900.

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Mass Assoc. of Relief Officers,
Apr. 12, 1901

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THE BEST METHODS OF DEALING WITH TRAMPS AND WAYFARERS.

On November 14, 1900, an open meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers was held in Channing Hall, Boston, to consider this subject, the President, Mr. Eben Beckford of Lynn, in the Chair.

Invitations to this meeting had been sent to the State Board of Charity and to its agents and visitors; to the Associated Charities of the different cities and towns in Massachusetts where such associations exist; to the Police Commissioners of Boston and to several superintendents of police; to the judges of the Central and District Municipal Courts of Boston, and to other persons known to be directly interested in the subject.

Beside members of the Association there were present at the meeting members of the State Board of Charity, of the Associated Charities of Boston and of Cambridge, of the Advisory Committee on the Penal Aspects of Drunkenness (Boston, 1899), and other persons.

The President introduced the subject of discussion as of importance to every town and to every individual.

He then presented, as the first speaker, Professor Francis G. Peabody of Cambridge.

ADDRESS OF PROFESSOR FRANCIS G. PEABODY.

One of the earliest treatises about the relief of the poor of which I have any knowledge was written, strangely enough, by the novelist Henry Fielding. Its title was "An Inquiry into the recent increase of Robbers." Under that unpromising title Fielding laid down some of the principles which have come to be considered at the foundation of the science of charity. The sentence which dropped at once into my mind, and which should be the motto of all discussions like the present, was this very elementary statement: "The only remedy for idleness is work." It seems a tolerably obvious remark, but a great deal of our lack of success in dealing with the problem of the vagrant unemployed has come of the failure to observe this obvious truth. That which naturally solves the problem of unemployment is employment; that which naturally solves the problem of vagrancy is the provision of regular and continuous work. All consideration of the problem of unemployment and vagrancy must begin with a confession, that it is but the edge of the much greater subject of the variations of industry, the alternations of business prosperity and depression, the whole great industrial problem of the age. Charity, either as a State relief or voluntary mitigation, is at best only a palliative of conditions which lie quite behind the sphere of charity.

When we consider the case of the tramp, the text which I have selected from Henry Fielding guides us. The tramp exists because of the community's lack of obedience to that text. The tramp thrives because the community and the individual are not equipped to provide, immediately and continuously, the only remedy, — work. The vagrant mendicant is not of the lowest type of the helpless poor; he is often an exceptionally acute, observant, somewhat philosophical character. There is something picturesque and even dramatic about a man who in the midst of a world of work can be perfectly free from the trammels of industry, and live — like

a professor — by his wits. That, indeed, is often the solicitation to the tramp life; it calls for a certain degree of acute and humorous alertness of mind. The tramp is not a person who cannot work, but a person who has educated himself to be one of the leisure class.

If any disposition, then, is to be made by individuals or communities, to meet such cases, such disposition must be made in terms of work; and it is perfectly easy, if any individual or community takes enough pains to be ready to meet the tramp with the statement: "I have provided arrangements for work, which are at your disposal." One thing the modern Christian cannot do,—he cannot refuse all help. But it is this fact which gives the tramp his living; he knows that it is impossible for a Christian community to refuse him altogether; and he knows that the Christian community is probably unprovided with work and, therefore, will probably support him in idleness.

Here we come upon the experience of other countries, where the industrial difficulty of immigration and vagrancy has been much more keenly felt, and where it has become necessary to provide on a large scale palliative measures. In Germany, in Holland, and in Belgium, we find a systematic colonization of the vagrant class. A tramp, under the laws of all these countries, is subject to conviction and arrest, but he is not treated as a criminal. He is regarded as a ward, a person whom the State must take in hand and for whom work must be provided, but provided at a distance from cities. The tramp colonies in Holland are "a dozen miles from anywhere," across a barren heath. Hither the vagrant mendicant under the laws of Holland is almost perfectly sure to find himself deported. What does he find there? He finds labor of the most varied kind, so that the community is largely self-supporting. Farm labor has converted a desert into a garden, and all the industries are in progress which a community of a couple of thousand people demands,—tailoring, shoe-making, and the rest. Can he run away? Yes, there

are but few guards, and those simply to preserve order. But where shall he run? First, a dozen miles over this barren plain; and when he comes to the first town he must go to work and earn his living, or, on the other hand, he must beg, in which case he will be sent back to the colony. Only one alternative presents itself,—that he should leave the country; and that is exactly what the government would prefer. The temptation to run, then, is not great. Most men occupy their leisure hours in securing work, and when it is obtained the man is released. In the colony half his wages are his, but they are reserved for him until he goes out; and then the major part of his earnings is not given to him, but sent before him to the town to which he is going, to his wife or to the sponsor or friend who is willing to receive him there. And further, in the various towns there are many associations for what we should call the help of released prisoners,—for the temporary care and supervision of these self-helpless wards of the State.

Such is the large, systematic, governmental way of meeting the evil of idleness by the provision of work. Is it possible that, on this large scale, the segregation of the vagrant type can be accomplished under American conditions? We are much less advanced in the whole matter of governmental interference; but the alternative is governmental maintenance in reformatories. It is, therefore, not a matter of extravagance but of economy for any community to protect itself in this way. And, much more deeply, it is a matter of justice; for a large proportion of such persons are, at a certain point in their career, redeemable, and the habit of idleness fixes itself on them gradually, as it would perhaps on some of us if it had a chance. I have sometimes dreamed that the State of Massachusetts might protect itself from harm, and do absolute justice to the vagrant class, by accepting something of the European principles. It is very important that the labor thus provided shall be, as far as possible, non-competitive labor. There are many kinds of

industry which are temporarily unremunerative, but which will be of the highest importance to future generations. One such undertaking is the digging of the Cape Cod Canal, referred to by Governor Wolcott in his message two years ago; — or, let us say, canal-making in general. Much more marked is the art known as forestration, — the replanting of waste districts with the trees which belong there. It is a kind of industry which cannot bring any profit for a whole generation, but which may be, not only commercially profitable, but of immense service to the future welfare of the State. I have looked at those barren districts on the elbow of Cape Cod, where for ten or fifteen miles there is hardly a house and hardly a tree, — a region once covered with a superb forest, — and I have sometimes pictured these wards of the State as reforestating this region. It is an occupation which could not bring suspicion to the most zealous trade-unionist, but might be the physical redemption of the State, and the physical and moral redemption of many a man.

But I do not mean to indicate to you specific methods. In some such way as this, each town and each State ought to make the problem of the vagrant class a past issue. It is a wholly superfluous problem, which is an affront to the intelligence of a modern State. It is preposterous that any such class — forty-five thousand strong, it is said — should exist. And the remedies are perfectly simple, when they are once considered in the light of this original statement, that there is but one remedy for idleness, and that is work.

Beyond all plans of reform, it must be added, the secret of such progress does not lie in any scheme. It lies, in a degree quite beyond expression, in the hands of the persons by whom relief is administered. What a difficult thing it is to administer official relief, and to maintain human relations of sympathy, hopefulness, faith! How difficult it is for the official not to become a part of the mechanism which he administers, and what is there more beautiful in the modern world than a person who thus

detaches himself from the machinery of routine, and deals with a person, not as a "case," but as a soul!

The Report of the Committee of 1899 was presented by Mr. Edward F. Brown, clerk of Overseers of the Poor, of Salem.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF 1899.¹

In the *Report of the State Board of Charity* for 1899, on page xxviii, as a small portion of a small foot-note to the Pauper Abstract, occur these words: "The cases of vagrancy numbered 207,081, and cost the public a direct outlay of \$25,843, besides increasing the expenses at almshouses by \$7243," — a total of \$33,086.

The dead weight of vagrancy which the State carries is not wholly measured even by these figures. Food is given to many of these men by hundreds of private families, and a certain number of petty offences are committed by them; occasionally more serious offences. No proof is needed that there *is* a dead weight, a burden that we wish to lighten. What are we now doing to check vagrancy, and what further steps can we take?

In the spring of 1899 a series of fifteen questions was sent to overseers of the poor throughout Massachusetts. Of these questions nine referred to the practice of the town in the treatment of tramps, and six to its opinion, based on experience, as to the best methods of dealing with them.

Answers were received from 184 cities and towns, representing about half the cities and towns in Massachusetts, which report more than 145,000 tramps housed during the year. This large number must not be understood to represent individuals. The use of the word "tramps" signifies the number of applications received from tramps and granted. It is possible that in some cases these may represent the

¹ Reprinted from the *Quarterly Publications of the American Statistical Association*, vol. vii, No. 51, 1900.

same tramp 365 times in the year. The following tables were drawn from the answers sent.

In all the tables presented allowance must be made for possible errors arising from some ambiguity in the answers returned or from some misunderstanding on the part of the committee. It must also be understood that for convenience the word "town" often covers both cities and towns. All populations are quoted from the Census of 1895.

In the various towns, tramps are under the supervision of different departments or officials as follows: —

Overseers of poor	111 towns
Police	55 "
Constable	3 "
Selectmen	2 "
City marshal	1 "
Tramp officer	1 "
Highway department	1 "
By contract	1 "
	<hr/>
	175 "
No tramps	7 "
Not specified	2 "
	<hr/>
	184 "

The expense incurred is charged to: —

Poor department	123 towns
Police department	26 "
Special appropriation	4 "
Miscellaneous	3 "
No expense	8 "
Sent no report	9 "
Report "no tramps"	11 "
	<hr/>
	184 "

Shelter is provided as follows: —

Police station	79 towns
Tramp house	40 "
Almshouse	36 "
Private families	12 "
Hotel	3 "
Wayfarers' Lodge	2 "
Town hall	1 "
Building in cemetery	1 "
	<hr/>
	174 "
No lodgings provided	10 "
	<hr/>
	184 "

Of these last, some are towns which have no applications from tramps and, therefore, need not consider the question.

Food, as a rule, consists of crackers, or crackers with cheese, milk or tea, etc., and, in a minority of cases, in a good meal. On the other hand some places furnish no food at all.

Are they ever brought before the court?

6 towns say "yes"	109 say "no"
38 "occasionally"	8 report no experience with tramps, or do
9 "only on criminal charges"	not answer.
7 "if repeaters"	117
7 "if unruly characters"	67
<hr/> 67	<hr/> 184

With regard to requiring work of tramps:—

37 towns or cities exact work,
23 exact work at times or "when we have work to do,"
124 do not require it.
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Most towns agree that such work is not profitable, and many declare that it costs more than it is worth. Others, however, say that the work offsets a portion of the expense, and believe it worth doing as it discourages tramps. The town of Sherborn says, "It had been the custom to house and feed all tramps applying for aid, and allow them to depart at 7 A.M. When the present Board of Overseers was elected, it was determined to put an end, as far as possible, to the tramp evil. From March, 1897, to March, 1898, we put up 1844 tramps. In April, 1898, we put them to work burying stone, grading, and fixing up around our new almshouse, and found the plan worked successfully, as we reduced the number to 167. In the winter they are provided with fuel but have to saw and split their own wood. Some are too lazy to do even this. The citizens have coöperated with the overseers and have refused demands for food, and have sent all applicants to the Almshouse. All deserving men going in search of work are aided and not detained more than an hour in the morning. We think we have solved the problem, and by utilizing their labor have saved the town some expense. If every town would only take advantage of the

law requiring tramps to work, and would arrest and have convicted all those who break tools, the tramps would be forced to obtain employment."

The town of Canton believes that "the labor obtained during the year paid for its own expense, as they filled in a good many yards of low ground and made the place just so much better." The town of Norton believes that the labor will offset 25 to 40 per cent of the expense, and though it had in 1895 fewer than 2000 inhabitants, stands up to the work of lodging and feeding and exacting two hours' work from tramps at sawing wood, because, as they say, "If a town refuses proper accommodations it will add to the expense of contiguous towns."

More towns believe in the practice of exacting work, however, than are at present carrying out that plan. When asked if tramps should be compelled to work:—

165 say "yes"
8 say "no"
7 are doubtful
4 report no experience;

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and when asked if all places should compel them to work, the answers are still different:—

138 yes
6 no
4 no experience
10 doubtful
26 "cities and large towns" or "where practicable."

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It is easy to see that the discrepancy of these answers arises from the differing size and conditions of towns.

It appears to be the general opinion through the State that accommodations should be provided by all towns for tramps.

140 towns say "yes"
29 " say "no."
15 " have no tramps or fail to give their opinion.

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Another side of the question is with regard to bathing,—Should tramps be compelled to bathe before being fed? The answers to this question are necessarily qualified by the difficulty and expense to small towns in making provision for bathing:—¹

89	towns say "yes"
40	" say "no"
7	" are doubtful
27	" "if convenient" or under certain circumstances
21	" give no answer
<hr/>	
184	

Is it desirable to have a uniform method of treatment?

148	towns say "yes"
17	" say "no"
19	" no answer or a doubtful one
<hr/>	
184	

We therefore see that almost all of the towns and cities furnish lodging of some sort to the homeless men who apply, with the exception of a few cities so placed that they may reasonably believe that the accommodations they refuse will be afforded by neighboring cities, and a few small towns that, having no accommodations for tramps, advise them to move on. About five out of six towns provide food of some sort; 8 cities and 50 towns exact work in some form, though in some cases only when they have work on hand.

We might expect to find that as a rule it would be the cities and large towns which would provide shelter and food *with work* for homeless men, but among 27 cities which have sent in reports, Boston, Lowell, Springfield, Brockton, and Newton are the only ones which invariably exact work, and Malden, Medford, and Beverly exact work when they have it. Three of these cities (Boston, Lowell, and Springfield) provide shelter other than the police station. There are, therefore, 50 towns which exact work (at all events

¹ Lanesborough and Wilmington think that if bathing were enforced smaller accommodations would be needed. Medway and Yarmouth think bathing useless unless clean clothing be provided. Waltham thinks they should be bathed if beds are provided. Monson thinks that they would generally need a night's soaking; and Chelmsford suggests anchoring them out all night. Palmer believes that "It would make some sick to take off all the dirt at once"; while Abington says, "Do you want to kill them?"

when they have work to give), and, among these, 18 have less than 2000 inhabitants by the Census of 1895. Even the small towns of Bernardston, Middleton, Dunstable, and Marion, all having less than 1000 inhabitants in 1895, exact a regular stint of work from those to whom they give food and shelter. Marion says "Formerly we simply lodged and fed them and let them go. Since April 1st (1899) we worked them two hours breaking stone in the morning. Now we rarely have any except Saturdays, and, as we cannot work them Sunday mornings, we think seriously of obliging them to attend church. What does the Association advise?"

So much has been gathered from the answers relating to *facts* concerning treatment of homeless men. Briefly, we may say, that the cities and towns reporting have followed one or another of the five different lines of practice indicated under the following headings, and as a rule express satisfaction with the course pursued:—

1. Towns which feed, shelter, and systematically work tramps.

Among these Boston, as is well known, established the Wayfarers' Lodge in 1879. Springfield also adopted this plan in 1894, and reports number of tramps diminished from 15,000 to less than 1500 in 1899. Lowell says, "Since we have compelled them to work, they avoid us as much as possible." The town of Palmer says,— "We find, since we began to work them we only have about 500. When we did not work them, or if we did not, we would have 2500. One time last winter five or six tramps came in and the keeper told them they would have to break stone in the morning. 'Yes,' they said, 'we know that; they told us that before we left Philadelphia.'" A number of other towns explicitly state the proportionate reduction of numbers which they have made by exacting work.

2. Towns which shelter and feed, or shelter only, but make a practice of taking before court on second or third application, or posting the vagrant law, or warning to leave town.

Among these are Taunton, Fall River, and Worcester. Of the smaller towns which pursue this policy, Pepperell says,

“After being overrun by tramps for years, the town left the question to the overseers of the poor and police who decided to enforce the tramp law. Notices were posted to the effect that we would put them up, but that they would be taken to court the next morning (exceptions made in case of weak, lame, etc., or in stormy weather). Little trouble since.” And Greenfield states,—“Of the 56 cases during the year, 16 were let go on giving a good account of themselves, 40 were prosecuted (14 sent to State Farm, 26 to House of Correction). We used to be overrun with them, but since adopting this method they shun the town.”

3. Towns which try to discourage by indirect means, usually by not giving food, or by placing tramp house far from centre of town.

Fitchburg says the plan of not feeding has reduced the number to one-half of what it was when they were fed. The experience of Holbrook is the same. Yarmouth refers them to almshouse, six miles away. Lanesborough says, “We made an arrangement with some person willing to accommodate the tramps and have found it a wise provision to have that person situated at a considerable distance from headquarters, so that the tramps must get considerable exercise after receiving the order before reaching their destination. This has doubtless cut down the number of applications materially.” Wareham, after providing comfortable quarters, which the tramps soon made unfit for use, has now boarded up the windows of tramp house; and Hatfield says,—“We have a small building in cemetery where they are lodged. It is not a popular location, so they pass us by.”

4. Towns which refuse to accommodate, except in stormy weather, or when applicants are sick or infirm.

Among these are Somerville, Everett, Chelsea, Natick, and Groton; the latter town says,—“We fed and lodged tramps till we had 400 to 600 a year, and decided to go out of business and refuse to entertain. Possibly during last year we put up 12 or 15 in cases of sickness or severe storms.”

5. *Towns which shelter, feed, and do not work or arrest, except upon serious charges.*

Under this heading are 6 cities and 59 towns, of which 20 have fewer than 1000 inhabitants. The small towns in the western part of the State have so few tramps that it appears to them a useless expense to make special provision for them. Seven of these towns report between them only 36 tramps during the year.

Of the groups of towns under these five headings, those under the first four headings are deterrent in their action, or mean to be deterrent.

Is it not a question whether the group under the fifth heading, which shelters, feeds, demands no work, nor arrests for vagrancy, does not, instead of putting up a barrier against tramping as a profession, rather instead make the road easy by supplying all the tramp needs or asks over-night, letting him go in the morning to get what he needs for the day's maintenance from the community?

Several cities and towns expressly say that they believe in leaving the whole question to the police,—among them Cambridge, Worcester, Taunton, and Fall River; but examination of the figures furnished by these and other cities gives reason to believe that what we may call the Wayfarers' Lodge policy, as illustrated by Boston and Springfield, tends more to reduce the number of tramps than the *apparently* more repressive course of placing the matter in the hands of the police. We may compare, for instance, Worcester, which lodges and feeds in the police station, with Springfield, which has a Wayfarers' Lodge. Worcester lodges its tramps in police station, gives crackers, no work, and keeps expense down to 1.4 cents apiece, the lowest stated expense; but while during the year Lowell has one tramp to every 44 inhabitants, Springfield one to 35, and Boston (the natural magnet to vagrancy in the State) one to 21, Worcester has one to every 9. Worcester reports 11,208 tramps during the year, very nearly half as many as Boston, a city of nearly five

times its population; and it has more than seven times the number of tramps reported by Springfield, although it is not twice the size of Springfield.

This comparison is not made by way of proving the absolute superiority of the treatment by Wayfarers' Lodge and work. Too many elements enter into the question of the trend of vagrancy through cities and towns to allow of establishing proof of absolute success or failure of any kind of treatment; but the comparison may at least indicate that the question is not altogether settled in favor of police accommodation and the no-work policy by the low rate at which a town may provide for a tramp. If 11,208 pass through Worcester during the year, getting shelter and crackers and no enforced work, it is at least conceivable that Worcester householders give more meals at back doors than householders in Springfield are called on to give.

Again, take the three cities of Hampden County. Springfield, through its Wayfarers' Lodge, gives food and shelter and compels each able-bodied man to saw one-fourth cord of wood, not discharging until this is done. Holyoke and Chicopee both lodge in the police station; give no food, nor do they exact any work.

	<i>Population.</i>	<i>Number of Tramps in 1899.</i>	
Springfield,	51,522	1,472	1 to 35 of population
Holyoke,	40,322	3,132	1 " 13 " "
Chicopee,	16,420	2,540	1 " 6 " "

This would indicate that decent conditions with work are more discouraging to the tramp than shelter in the police station without either food or work.

In the *Report on the Subject of the Unemployed*, March 13, 1895, on page 15 of *Part II, Wayfarers and Tramps*, in evidence given by Chicopee, it is said that "in January, 1895, a rumor was printed in the Springfield newspaper that a wood-yard had been established here (Chicopee) where we should make the tramps work. The result was that whereas we had been having from 25 to 30 a-night, the number for the next week fell to an average of 6 to 8 a-night. Then

they found that it was a hoax, and gradually reached their former numbers . . . Most of the old hobos give Springfield a wide berth, going straight through from Connecticut to Chicopee or Holyoke in a day, or stopping out at Westfield or Easthampton."¹

If we compare the number of tramps in Chicopee and in Springfield as reported to the State Board of Charity for the last five years, we find that during these years Chicopee has had in all 13,802 tramps, Springfield 7818. Chicopee has reduced her yearly number from 2780, reported in 1896, to 1677 in 1900. Springfield has reduced 2258, reported in 1896, to 755, reported in 1900.

If tramps come into the State, they will get their food and shelter *somewhere*. If some towns give either or both without work, they will gravitate to those towns. When work is demanded for the accommodations given, there is a fair presumption that they will avoid those towns. There is the remoter possibility that if the practice widens and spreads, vagrancy may decrease throughout the State, — some men may graduate into decent self-supporting work, and younger men may be deterred from taking up vagrancy as a profession. Probably there will always be some in whom restlessness is inherent; but there would be at least the possibility of these taking to employments which offer variety and are in themselves irregular, becoming sailors, fishermen, etc.

Some of the towns which believe the matter should be left to the police, evidently believe that that course would be deterrent; while they believe that to place it with the overseers of the poor is too easy a method to employ with men who have no intention of working and who may be law-breakers. The answer to this would be that men recognized as vagrants or law-breakers should be arrested as vagrants, or under any statute which covers their offense, and the

¹ In 1894-95 the Commission on the Unemployed took evidence from 66 cities and towns, of whom 15 exacted work, either regularly or when they had it to give, a proportion of less than one-quarter. In 1899, out of 184 cities and towns, 58 exact work, either regularly or when they have it to give, a little less than one-third.

co-operation of the police secured at that point. Lodging all wayfarers in the police station does not necessarily sift out the law-breakers or the men honestly out-of-work. The work-test, as used by either overseers of the poor or police, is more likely to do this and should be applied. The consideration of immediate cost which stands in the way of this course, or of arrest on necessary occasion, should be balanced with the cost to the community at large of acting as an open channel through which a current of vagrancy runs along unchecked.

In considering the question, we want to consider both the good of the community and of the individual who may be helped or who must be controlled. There is no kindness in making it easy for a man to tramp instead of trying to get regular work. No one who knows tramps will think it so. The sooner a man who is slipping into vagrancy can be made to realize that it is a way of life not tolerated in the community, the better for him; and there seems to be evidence to show that the cities and towns which most consistently make an effort to exact work of the men whom they lodge and feed do most to make this understood, and thereby do most to check vagrancy.

The Committee wish to acknowledge the careful and thoughtful answers received from many of the towns in answer to the fifteen original questions; they indicate a serious and persistent effort to reduce vagrancy. Valuable suggestions were made in a number of the answers regarding experience, and in letters accompanying the answers.

The Chairman then called on Mr. William P. Fowler, Chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Poor of Boston. Mr. Fowler hoped that the statistics shown in the Report would clear the way for future work, resulting in some uniform system throughout the commonwealth. Everyone must be struck by the complete failure on the part of some towns

to appreciate the fact that they owe any duty to their neighbors, and that there is any such thing as comity between towns and cities. If such boards cannot themselves see this, they ought to be made to see it by laws which would apply equally throughout the commonwealth.

This is not merely for the purpose of suppressing the tramp. We ought always to consider the increasingly large proportion of worthy men, who are actually looking for work of some kind, who apply for a night's lodging. In Boston, some sixty per cent of the whole number applying last year were apparently not tramps, but men really seeking for employment. Such men should not be treated with disrespect by officials. We owe a duty to a fellow man who is out of money and out of work, and going from town to town to procure it.

In Boston, as in Springfield, the number of applicants for lodging is on the decrease. In the year 1899 there were but 16,000 lodged at the Wayfarer's Lodge, while in the year 1894 there were lodged by the police and the overseers together almost 50,000. In the year 1895, though the police had stopped putting up tramps, the number at the Wayfarer's Lodge fell from 32,000 to 21,000. A large part of this decrease must be attributed to the better times which have prevailed; it is not altogether due to the fact that men have had to work, or to superior management. We want to make the system still better; and one thing we can do as an Association is to see that any well-meaning man, though poor, who comes into your town or mine, may have a little help, a night's lodging, a chance to be clean, and something to eat, and may go off with a heart for finding work.

Mr. George W. Patterson, patrolman, detailed on special duty by the Superintendent of Police of Boston, read a paper¹ giving a graphic account of some of his experience with homeless persons and vagrants during the last two years. He stated that the larger number of tramps are men, with no

¹ *The Boston Daily Globe* and *Boston Herald* for Nov. 14, 1900 (evening editions), contain copies of this paper.

home or employment, who wander from place to place, riding on freight-cars, sleeping in barns or station-houses, and finally turning up in our city, where they stay long enough to get money to push on farther, or, as more often happens, they are placed under arrest. There is also the pauper element, who have been time after time in the almshouse, and who beg on the streets, always giving false addresses; the persons who simulate lameness, deafness, etc.; the writers of begging letters and poems, and the sellers of pencils and almanacs; also those who take children about with them — some of the children having been injured for life — that they may appeal more effectively to the sympathies of passers-by.

One great difficulty in the suppression of begging and vagrancy, Mr. Patterson said, is the unwillingness of the person who reports a case to take the further step of appearing as a witness. If citizens would realize how important it is for them to do their part, and do it willingly, we should not be long in ridding the community of tramps and beggars.

Mr. George M. Stebbins, City Marshall of Springfield, spoke of tramps arrested under the Tramp and Vagrant law.

As there is a Wayfarers' Lodge in Springfield, Mr. Stebbins had only dealt with men already sifted out as subjects for arrest, or those who applied for a night's lodging too late for admission to the Lodge. He thought that there should be such uniform dealing with tramps that descriptions of them could be kept, and their identity made known to the Police Department.

Prof. Davis R. Dewey, Secretary of the American Statistical Association, and one of the Committee on the Subject of the Unemployed (1894), said, You have heard from those who have to do with the question officially; as a citizen I think it is fair to say that it is not wished to solve the problem by excluding it. The average citizen is going to relieve the tramp. If the town will not assist the tramp after ten o'clock, some citizen, whom you cannot altogether blame, will assist

him. I was glad to hear that the overwhelming opinion of the report was in favor of establishing a work-test.

Judge J. W. Pettingill of Malden emphasized the need of uniform legislation, not only for the small town, but for the large municipality. From thirty years' experience, he could not conceive why the intelligence of Massachusetts has not struck upon a line of uniform legislation on this subject.

We have been told, he said, that all tramps are liars, but my experience shows that they are not. Misfortune, adverse circumstances, domestic difficulties, have reduced to poverty men and women who are by no means liars, who need sympathy to help them to a higher level and to a better regulation of themselves. Three men were brought into my court, charged with being vagrants. I continued the case twice to find whether they had told me the truth. I ascertained that they had done so, and put them on probation. They are at work in the factories today, and are honorable citizens. I could give you many more instances.

The Board of Overseers in Malden are human beings. At Wakefield, also, and at Medford I have tested them, and found them generous and true. Such qualities are most important in discriminating between the vagrant and the worthy poor.

Hon. Robert Treat Paine, President of the Associated Charities (Boston), advocated a uniform system throughout Massachusetts, except, perhaps, in the very smallest towns. Wayfarers should receive decent treatment, such as will not push them down to a lower level and make them worse men when they go out than when they came in. An eight-day sentence, such as is the custom of some towns, is not of the slightest use, but sends the man out worse than when he came in. It does not repress his criminal instincts; he is probably readier to go in the next time. But to send a man to the State Farm on a two-year indeterminate sentence may turn him out a great deal better.

We want to do the best in our power to reform these men. We should not treat them as though they were hopeless

and confirmed brutes, but with a large measure of humanity mingled with firmness, so that crime may be repressed, and the remnant of human instincts in each one of them may be strengthened and cultivated.

Mr. Robert T. Swan, Commissioner of Public Records, (Massachusetts), wished to say a few words on behalf of the very small towns. These towns are poor, and if the larger towns apply the work-test and drive the tramps away, the smaller towns will get them. All along the State line is a line of small and poor towns which receive all the tramps which come from other States. They must be considered. It is a difficult problem for them.

Eighteen towns in Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire reported only 366 tramps between them cared for by the town in the course of the year. I fancy they have had many more, but the humane feeling of the farmer leads him to give the tramp some supper, take away his matches, and let him sleep in the barn.

Theory and practice are often antagonized. The theory that the State should help the towns is not a good one, but in practice they have to do it.

I find a feeling in the hill-towns that they are so apart from the larger life of the cities that it is not of much importance what they do; but they will be glad to be a little in touch with the rest, and in almost every town can be found at least one man of public spirit who will be glad to coöperate with you.

Mr. Benjamin Pettee, Secretary of Board of Overseers of the Poor, of Boston, suggested that several small towns could combine in maintaining a work-test in some central location.¹

Mr. Pettee then read the following letter from Mr. Jacob A. Riis, of New York City: —

NEW YORK, Nov. 3, 1900.

You ask my opinion on the general policy in cities of lodging tramps and wayfarers in police stations. My opinion

¹ See p. 32, Appendix B; Wellesley.

is that it is a very bad practice and a great wrong alike to the commonwealth and the one it assumes so to shelter. I base it upon our experience in New York where the police station lodging-rooms were the foulest disgrace until Theodore Roosevelt happily rid us of it when he was president of the Police Board. Those I saw in Chicago last winter were even worse. We *did* have separate rooms for lodgers and prisoners. In Chicago they jammed them into one, with the rats.

The Chicago policeman who showed me around put the fundamental objection to the practice tartly, when indignation got the better of me and I burst out in a denunciation of the system. He was genuinely astonished; "Why should you care about such as them," he said. "We don't think any more of them than we do of the tramp dogs in the streets." The same spirit, less frankly expressed, existed in New York under the old system. It is not the business of the police to deal out charity in any form. They are doing well if they manage the justice end of it. Their training makes them unfit for the task. Leave them to their proper profession of locking up offenders. That is the inevitable aspect it will assume with them. In individual cases they may deal well with such cases. So soon as the matter becomes routine it will approach the shape in which we found and fought it, and in which it has to be fought down in Chicago before improvement can proceed in any other quarter. What is now going on there is the worst possible libel on the sweet name of human charity.

Of necessity the police, busy with many other duties that must seem to them of greater moment, can not give the subject the *investigation* it requires. But investigation, as you know, is the keystone of it all. Merely lodging and feeding the homeless anywhere, and turning them out to go on tramping, is direct encouragement to tramping. I have once been "on the road" myself, and I know that there is an insidious poison in the tramp's life that saps the energy of the man, until in a very little while he does not care for anything,

so long as he can fill his belly and lie and bask in the sun. The thing is to make it as *difficult* for him to do this as possible. Free lodging anywhere makes it easy for him, if that is all there is of it. Police station lodging-rooms in the cities are ideal provision for the old tramp, because they enable him to spend every cent he can beg or steal for beer at the saloon that sets out a free lunch and so feeds him for the price of the drink. The triple alliance of free lodging, free lunch, and stale beer (to be had at a cent a glass) simply filled New York up with tramps. The young, who might have been switched off by investigation, found nothing to stop them, and in the contamination of the police lodging house became speedily as bad as the worst. We established a lodging house with a decent bed, breakfast, a bath, and *investigation*¹; in the police station they got nothing and had to go out and beg in the morning the first thing. The investigation was at once the thing the old tramps feared and the net that caught the young ones and turned at least some of them back to decency and honest work. We lack yet a farm school for those who need training and correction, as the logical link that shall complete the chain. The upshot of the investigation was to be the workhouse for the old vagrant, the farm school for the young, and work and help, as it might be needed, for the honestly unfortunate homeless.

I fought to get the clause taken out of our charter which makes it the duty of the police to take care of vagrants, but did not succeed. It is still there, a constant peril. The police ought never to have been charged with such a task. That they were, was due to the mistaken notion, to the inhuman notion you might well call it, that the homeless are all tramps by choice. It is the quickest way of making them that, to dump them with the real tramps, and a simple way of solving the problem. They are then ripe for the workhouse, all of them. But you know that it is not true, and that such problems are not solved that way.

¹ See *A Ten Years' War*, by Jacob A. Riis, for the result.

The duty of society in the premises is to sift the heap, and stop the young who are just on the edge of trampdom. The number of these grows in a city in exact proportion to the free provision that is made for them without work or inquiry. It is not fixed.

I am not so sure of the applicability everywhere of the work-test, but *inquiry* fills the bill. Anything does that *takes notice* of the tramp with the purpose not to let him go tramping any longer.

Work and Investigation are the wicket-gate where you can stop many a young tramp. The police are not in a position to furnish either.

Therefore they must not have charge of the gate.

Yours faithfully,

JACOB A. RIIS.

Mr. Jeffrey R. Brackett, President of Board of Supervisors of Public Charities of Baltimore, said: That admirable letter from New York has given us words we ought to remember. The first is Work, the second is Inquiry. We have tried the two things in Baltimore; and I make my plea for more careful inquiry, in order to treat these men more as individuals.

In Baltimore we try thus to deal with them individually. We have done away with the old rule about a two-days limit in the lodging house; we will keep a man two weeks, or three, if it is going to help him to be a man.

In six years our methods have been much changed, but I will not go into the detail now. We used to have the police station at its worst, and the first step in the change was when the police realized that in lodging men over night and turning them out on the street in the morning, they were directly promoting lawlessness and crime. The second step was that at the door of the almshouse was put an inquiry officer, who sought to treat the persons individually. And the third was work at the Wayfarer's Lodge for some, and almshouse work for others who, having recovered from slight ailments, were able to do such work. We have a prescription

of work at the almshouse, just as we have a prescription of quinine or any other medicine.

I simply urge upon you the need of inquiry and of work for every man. It is not enough to give a man a start for the day with a breakfast; if we are going to do anything for him, let us do enough, whatever that may be.

After passing a vote of thanks to the American Unitarian Association for the use of Channing Hall the meeting was adjourned.

APPENDIX A.

QUESTIONS SENT IN 1899 TO OVERSEERS OF THE POOR THROUGHOUT MASSACHUSETTS.

The Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers, which is composed of Overseers of the Poor from a large number of cities and towns, are desirous of obtaining information in relation to the Tramp Problem: to ascertain if laws cannot be enacted which will bring about a uniform method of treating this class of people by all cities and towns, to the end that the burdens and difficulties may be more equitably distributed, and if possible largely reduced: and the Association has voted to send a circular to every city and town in the commonwealth, asking the Overseers of the Poor to aid them by answering the questions printed. Will you kindly take the time and interest to help us in this matter, as it is done for the betterment of all localities, and is becoming a very serious problem.

EDWARD F. BROWN, *President.*
OTIS MERRIAM, *Secretary.*

1. How many Tramps were put up in your town from April 1, 1898, to April 1, 1899?
2. Are they under the supervision of the Overseers of the Poor, or what officer?
3. Are they fed? If so, how fed and on what food?
4. Are they lodged in the Police Station or elsewhere?
5. Are they ever brought before the Court?
6. Is the expense charged to the Poor, or other department?
7. What time do you allow them to enter the lodging place and at what hour do you allow them to depart?
8. Should Tramps be compelled to work for food and lodging?
9. Do you compel them to work? If so, how many hours, on what?
10. Do you lodge and feed Tramps in the Almshouse?
11. Should all places compel Tramps to work?
12. Should accommodations be provided by all Towns for them?
13. Should they be compelled to take a bath before being fed?
14. Is it desirable to have a uniform method of treatment?
15. Will you kindly relate your experience in dealing with this question in your Town?

APPENDIX B.

CANTON.—NORFOLK COUNTY.

Our experience has been that the requirement to work keeps many from applying for lodging, except in stormy weather. Most of our tramps work fairly well; some, of course, will either refuse or shirk. Those that refuse do not have any food. As Canton is on the line to Taunton, New Bedford, and Fall River, we have a large number of men who claim to be mill operatives tramping both ways looking for work. During the past year, we think the labor obtained has paid for the expense, as we have filled in a good many yards of low ground and made the place just so much better. If every town would adopt same method of treatment there would be no choice of quarters, and all would know that they would get the same treatment wherever they might be.

FRANCIS D. DUNBAR,
for Overseers of the Poor.

HADLEY.—HAMPSHIRE COUNTY.

Every tramp who is not old or infirm should be made to work every day for three months at some central place controlled by the State. I have scared some of them by telling them that, if they do not move on, a complaint will be made to the district court, and then a term at Bridgewater will be the result. The trouble in many places, and more especially in country towns, is that the police support that is so much needed is not at hand, unless a good deal of time is spent in the matter. During an experience of nine years as an overseer of the poor in Hadley, it is a rare case to find one of these knights of the road who will work one hour for the best meal of victuals that any farmer has to give. I asked a strong fellow why he did not go to work, and his answer was, "I don't know how. I should have to learn."

A. E. COOK,
Chairman, Overseers of Poor.

MARLBOROUGH.—MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

I would erect county houses of detention where all tramps should be obliged to apply for food and lodging and a bath, there to remain until given work for the State or county, in making better roads, removing brushwood from the roads in outlying districts, building bridges, and otherwise improving the State and county roads. I would pay them a nominal price per day, beside food and lodging. When they found a more lucrative position, I would offer them all encouragement possible. I think this tramp question one for our statesmen to grapple with, and prevent, if possible, applications for food from door to door by so-called tramps. These men are producing no wealth, as they labor not; but the good people of our several communities dislike to refuse them food. They are, therefore, supported by those who are honest and self-supporting. These men should be obliged to improve property and produce wealth if we are to have an ideal community, such as we wish to have in this good old Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

T. J. HARRIS,
City Almoner.

PEPPERELL.—MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

After being overrun with tramps for years, the town left the question to Overseers of Poor and Police, who decided to enforce the tramp law. Notices were posted to that effect, and when tramps applied for lodging they were told that we would put them up, but that they would be taken into court in the morning. Of course, exception is made with the weak and lame; also if the weather is very stormy. We have been troubled very little with them since. I am very much in favor of some general plan of dealing with the question which will give uniformity of action.

L. R. QUA,
Secretary, Overseers of Poor.

WAKEFIELD.—MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

Two years ago Wakefield was putting up three thousand tramps a year, and at town meeting the overseers were authorized to establish a tramp house, where people who applied for relief could saw wood for three hours. During the last year the tramps have sawed a hundred cords of wood, which has all been sold. We buy wood for \$4.50 a cord and we sell it for a \$1.00 a foot, making a profit of \$3.50. It is delivered by the superintendent of the town farm, and we find it a profitable investment. A man goes to the tramp-house at six o'clock and stays till nine, and in the morning he goes and superintends the sawing of the wood. Saturday nights we had more tramps, because they thought there would be no sawing on Sunday; but we put in electric lights and had the wood sawed on Saturday evening.

The tramps who apply are mostly intelligent men, mechanics, and they repeatedly say to me, "Can't you get us some kind of work? We are willing to work if we can get anything."

We have made this experiment pay. The wood brings in an income of \$800.00, which will cover the expenses and possibly the pay of the man who goes there to take charge. We do not give supper, but in the morning baked beans, coffee, and all the crackers they can eat. We do not furnish very nice beds, for there is no mattress; but it is warm and comfortable.

WILLIAM A. CUTTER.

Overseer of Poor.

WAREHAM.—PLYMOUTH COUNTY.

Formerly tramps were fed and slept in the almshouse. Then a small building was built close by the almshouse, furnished with bedding and stove. They were fed on meat, crackers and coffee, and we tried to make them comfortable. They had orders to leave beds made up, room swept out, but we found we could not enforce it; the bedding was soon

destroyed. At length we dropped meat and coffee from the bill of fare, and today we give six crackers for a meal and all the water they will draw from the well. The windows of the house are boarded up. I have been an overseer since 1878. Living in the centre of town I have had all the tramps to deal with, so far as giving them a ticket to superintendent of almshouse. The permit was given up four years ago, because I refused to have my house used any longer as an office for all the tramps to come to for them; they now go direct to the tramp-house and leave when they please,—most of them glad to get away as soon as possible. As to bringing them before Court, should most certainly advise it, provided that the Court was in sympathy with the movement. My only experience was when I had three before Court. Because I would not swear they had asked for something to eat they were discharged; I concluded it was of no use for me to waste any more time, and have not tried since.

GEORGE F. WING.

Overseer of Poor.

WESTON.—MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

We are a new board this year, so have not had much experience. I believe they were compelled to work for food a few years ago, but it was decided that it cost more to get the work out of them than it was worth. But I believe it is the only proper way to do, and if the towns generally would insist upon it, I believe it would greatly diminish the number. I believe that there should be convenient places in each town where anyone could get a good meal or good lodging and be made to work for it, then have a State law prohibiting begging at private houses, and I can see no reason why the problem would not be solved. If a tramp is well fed and lodged and made to bathe every day, I think he would soon cease to be a tramp.

H. L. COOPER,

Clerk, Overseers of Poor.

In this connection may be quoted the following suggestion made by the Keeper of the Lock-up at Wellesley, in his evidence before the Commission on the Unemployed in 1894: —¹

My idea as a remedy for the increasing number of tramps is that they should be put on a farm and compelled to work. Let several towns combine and buy a tract of land and establish a stone-crusher for the common benefit of all. This would supply all the towns with crushed stone for their roads, keep the tramps to work, and also keep support them. . . . Of course, in connection with the stone-crushing plant, they could run a farm, which would supply a good deal of the produce to feed the tramps.

¹ Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed. House Document No. 50, March 13, 1895. Part II, *Wayfarers and Tramps*, p. 75.

APPENDIX C.

TRAMPS AND WAYFARERS.¹

Two practical questions are the outcome of all our labor on this question : —

First. Is any concerted action on the subject advisable and best? and

Second. What should that action be?

Let us consider, first, the public good as it affects private rights, — what general benefit or injury is likely to result from concerted legislation looking to the suppression of the tramp.

No one will deny that he is one of the very latest fruits of civilization so far as our own State is concerned. We who remember the time before the war know that in any given night in 1850 there could not have been found in the whole State, outside Boston, as many persons answering to the name “tramp” as now are to be found in any one of twenty towns, and quite as plentifully distributed, *pro rata*, throughout the State.

Various causes contributed to this change. Among them is the great increase in facility of cheap travel, by which a man may come from the interior of Russia for less money than it cost our grandfathers to travel to New York. Also the freedom of sons of immigrants, through the bettering of the condition of the parents, from the hard conditions which at home would have early bound them to a life of meagrely remunerated toil, has, through the desire of the parents to see their children spared some of their own hardships, tended toward the same result.

These causes have operated exclusively among the late comers to this country. A third cause is one that may operate upon the descendants of the earlier immigrants and

¹ Paper read before the Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers at the meeting of December 12, 1900, by Dr. Henry Shaw, Room 123, State House, Boston, Settlement Clerk of the city of Boston from 1875 to 1900, and author of *The Settlement Laws of Massachusetts*, 1900.

upon the later with equally disastrous effect. It is the abuse in some cases of the lavish bounties paid in the form of pension and State aid to the soldiers of the Civil War. Out of these conditions and others has arisen a class who mean to live without work, many of whom are too bright to lay themselves open to arrest for crime, and mixed with them are an uncertain number of honest laborers. Nor are all those who have taken, deliberately, to tramping in an equal degree hardened. The yearly recruits who join that ignoble army must be less vicious than those ten years on the road, and must, therefore, be amenable to milder measures of reform. No one who has known how often a mere restless desire to see the world, or a temporary freak of insubordination, or a just intolerance of unhappy scenes in the daily home life may have sent the inexperienced boy away from home, will for a moment doubt that in these cases a wise word kindly spoken may prove like apples of gold set in pictures of silver and save a multitude from death. Is this evil great enough to call for the costly continuous effort that will be necessary for its suppression? It is easy to see that some of the answers of the committee did not include in their scope anything more than a purely local view. "What is the apparent immediate interest of our town?" That is generally the question answered, and it might appear at first glance that when the sum of all the answers of all the municipalities was thus ascertained the interests of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts would be surely known.

But if, as some believe, this is a case in which the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts — that in this analysis of fractions we have lost account of the spirit that makes the aggregation a great State — we may see the necessity of going a little deeper than a mere summing up of the favorable and adverse votes.

In this view we have only to take the beautiful and illuminating figure of St. Paul — that of the body and the members — to be convinced that what Boston or Worcester is

profoundly interested in is the manner in which Egremont or Carlisle treats its tramps, and that to Egremont and Carlisle it is equally important that the larger communities should be wise and just in their action. Any continuous and systematic violation of the sound principles of justice and wisdom, which rightly considered are the only sure foundations upon which a State can build or continue to stand, must in the end be as disastrous to them as though they themselves had made the mistake or done the wrong.

The time is long past, if it ever was, when any municipality can safely treat economical questions of public policy from the isolated standpoint of what seems temporarily best for itself alone. Every rail laid down, every wire strung, every rod of better highway made is but a nerve of intelligence shooting along the inanimate earth in all directions, filling it with life and protesting against the theory of isolation, proclaiming that "we all are members of one body." And not only will the larger places feel the effects of improper action, or of failure to act, on the part of others far away, but these themselves will suffer, immediately or later for the same shortsightedness.

We can safely assume, then, that if a plan not too expensive can be devised it is for the interest of all the towns that it should be put in operation. The consideration of the interest of the individual need detain us but a minute, for there can be few points of divergence between his true interests and those of the people at large.

Liberty within the law is the only condition that offers any permanent advantage, and any other, however attractive and alluring, leads to a loss of all that makes life worth living. The saddest and most hopeless persons whom the relieving officer meets (hopeless equally to themselves and to those who would help them) are those who in the anticipation of greater liberty have sold themselves into a bondage which admits of no perfect emancipation. But I believe that many of the class whom we are considering are yet in a state in

which a wise and kind reformatory discipline may restore them to their proper and honorable position in the body politic or guide them into it. And this cannot be done, or even begun, by any man who despises them.

If one were disposed to take the answers to the committee's questions literally and to give permanent value to utterances that were meant rather to condense in an epigram a somewhat sharp opinion than to express the full view of the writer, we might infer that the official attitude toward them gives small hope of change for the better, while the present order continues, but without attributing inhumanity to the writers of the generalizing phrases with which the answers abound, it is easy to see that the position of the average overseer of the poor in many communities makes it quite impossible that he should be the best person to do this work.

In the country he is always a busy man; he has merely a nominal compensation for services; his almshouse is three or four miles away from his house, and if to his present duties were added that of dealing personally with city roughs, the office would have even less attraction for him than it has now. An overseer of the poor should hold himself ready to believe that a man may be under the necessity of passing a night in some town other than that in which he has a settlement, and yet is not, therefore, necessarily dishonest or untruthful. We should do justice to each: so much a mere sense of right demands; and we cannot exercise the severity that may be necessary in some cases, without first making sure that no person is wrongfully or even excessively punished.

The very discrepancy in the reports is the strongest reason for placing the management in careful hands guided by wise kindness, for while one observer does not believe that any of these men care for work, another, with a much larger field for observation, and in some respects a less promising field, believes that as many as one-half are willing to work.

To the humane man the percentage is not of so much consequence, as the fact that there are some such to be found by

careful search, and as the whole power of the State would be enlisted to rescue even one man in five hundred wrongfully in prison at Charlestown, we have the right and the duty to see that not one man in all the roads in the State, who is honestly trying to support himself and those dependent on him, shall be herded and classed with those into whose company he is cast. We owe this duty of discrimination and variation of treatment to him as well as to those less worthy, for it is only when classification begins that we can act effectively. These considerations seem to make it clear that it is for the best good of this class of dependents that general concerted action should be taken.

As all but the smallest minority of towns reported agree that some concerted action is necessary we come to the final question, "What should that action be?"

In saying that it must be uniform we apparently concede that it cannot be undertaken by agencies now in charge of municipal aid, for no man can devise a plan that will work well in a large municipality and is also practicable in a town of the size of Dunstable.

The difficulties seem insuperable, and legislation that makes a local treatment of the question obligatory finds no machinery in the smaller towns by which it can be made to go. A law without power to enforce it is like a bullet in a gun without powder behind it. When three or five of these sturdy travellers appear in one of the cities or larger towns and apply for help, the fact that all the officer has to do is to step to a telephone six feet away in order to bring down upon them the whole police force makes any use of the power unnecessary. For these places it must be conceded that the present state of legislation and provision for these cases is reasonably sufficient, the result being that the applicant will generally avoid them and go to the surrounding towns.

How different are the conditions which he finds there! The almshouse is on a by-road, a mile from the centre, and

in a lane a quarter of a mile from the county road. The town allows for the wages of no able-bodied man on the farm, except the keeper, except for three months in planting time and haying, and in many of the working days the keeper is half a mile away.

In the house are half a dozen demented, mildly insane, easily excited inmates, and only the matron to care for them and to meet the raid of two or three or five sturdy tramps. If she had anyone to send for the town constable, he has been chosen rather to post warrants for town meetings than to fight battles, and besides at any given moment may be on the road to Boston with a load of market produce. The state of the almshouse is no worse than that of the average dwelling in this particular, and thus it is seen that in at least three-fifths of the towns in the State covering so much of its territory, but not including more than a quarter of its population, any provision that leaves the handling of tramps to the local authorities finds no adequate means for its enforcement. The number of persons in these towns who, through fear of consequences or misguided sympathy or carelessness, confirm and make permanent this evil would surprise any investigator who made careful enquiry.

As to the best practical method of meeting all the conditions, the germ may perhaps be found in the admirable address of Professor Peabody before the Association at the meeting of November 14th.

If the State owned four small farms, say in Middleborough, Wilmington, Stirling, and Chesterfield, there would be few places which would not be within thirty miles of one of them, and all, excepting the last, would be within easy railroad communication with all surrounding territory. In each of them a small farm with buildings might be bought and put into condition for the reception of the traveller.

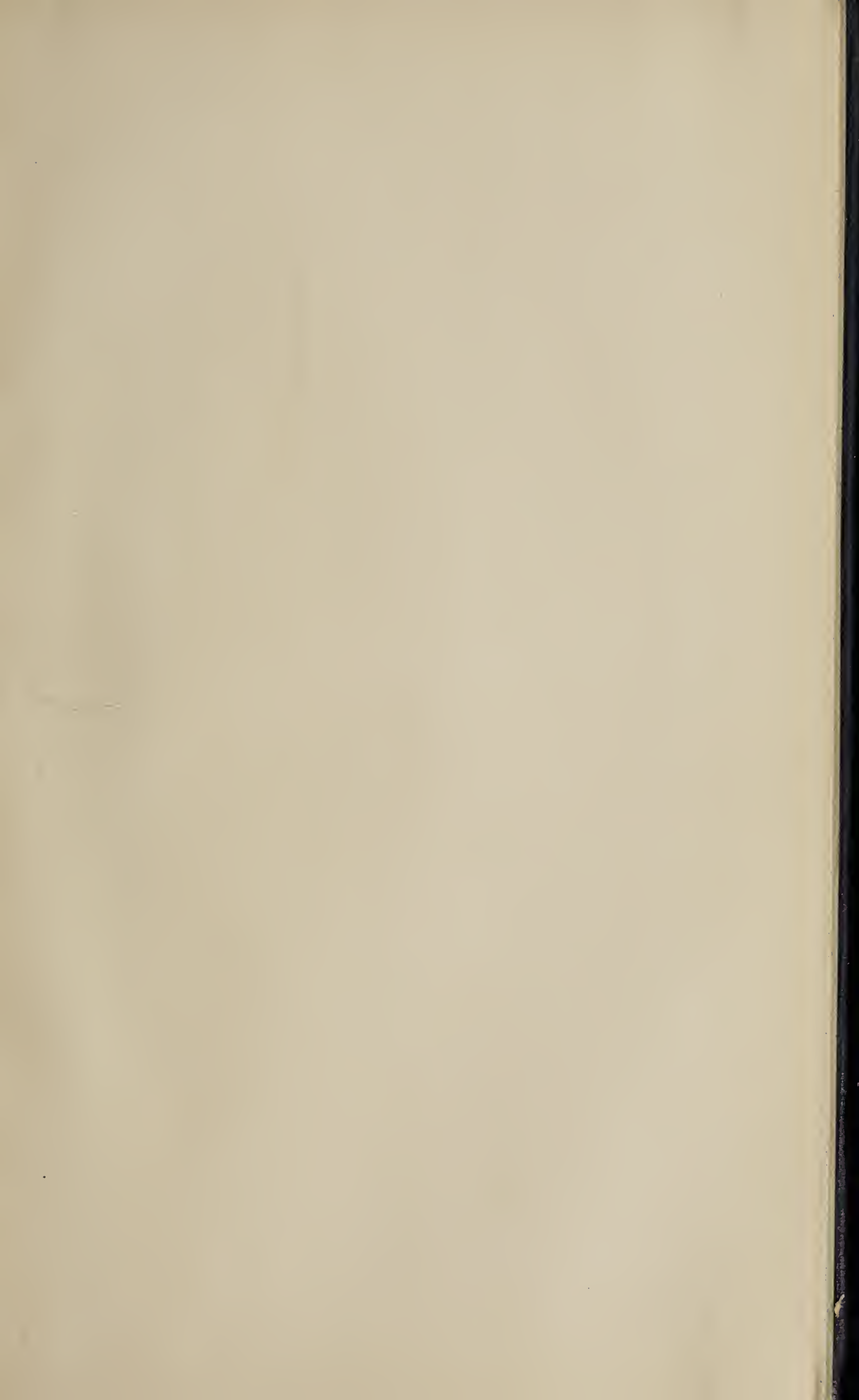
Let every person going from place to place without definite destination, needing, or asking relief, be sent by the overseer of the poor at the expense of the State to the nearest house of detention, with a commitment paper that will be evidence against him if he goes elsewhere as a tramp. A duplicate

description, such as is used in the navy, one copy to be kept by the overseer, the other forwarded, would secure identification when needed and be evidence in case of change of name.

The house of detention would also act as an employment bureau, finding places for men when fit, and giving them useful work to do while waiting. To it the employers of labor in the country round might learn to come, as they have for years come to the office of the Boston Industrial Aid Society, and the almshouse taint and the penal institution features should be studiously avoided.

As to the kind of labor that should be done while the laborer is waiting for a place, the suggestions of Professor Peabody seem in point. In all these towns are miles and miles of shadeless highways and hundreds of acres of land in private ownership, now worth ten dollars an acre, which in thirty years might be made worth hundreds of dollars an acre, by planting the white-ash, rock-maple, and walnut, all hardy, easily-started timber trees. It is probable that after the plan was once successfully on foot, many of the owners of land would find it for their interest to pay well for having this work done. In the parts of the year in which neither starting of trees from the seed, nor transplanting could properly be done, the roads are always ready to be made better, and always needing it.

The general care and direction of these four houses should be exercised by a superintendent of the whole, and with the advice of the wardens he should decide upon the disposition of each case. It might be that the Holland scheme of reserving all the wages earned during the detention, and forwarding them to the place where work is secured or where the family of the laborer lives, will be expedient. Perhaps it will be found best to pay all wages and expenses during detention directly from the State Treasury without regard to settlement, as the other course would involve long and expensive research. But when the place of lawful settlement is known, it should be made easy to discharge the laborer to that place if it is otherwise expedient. All details can be carefully worked out if the general plan seems expedient.



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